

THE MINES
of
RINGWOOD



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NEWFOUNDLAND, NEW JERSEY 07435

THE MINES OF RINGWOOD

by Claire K. Tholl

In the early days the stream that branches off the Wanaque River and runs northward through our beautiful valley was called the Topomopock. In 1736 Cornelius Board, a Welshman who had come to America just six years before, explored this valley looking for useful metals. He found enough outcroppings of iron ore to convince him to purchase several tracts of land and begin foundry operations. He settled first at what is now Sterling Lake, N. Y. and in 1740 moved down to the manor area. He built his home at the junction of the Wanaque and Topomopock (now Ringwood River) and erected a forge on the present Cooper Union property utilizing ore from pits he opened on the hillside to the west. Less than two months afterward Board was joined by the Ogdens of Newark who bought the remaining iron-rich tracts and water rights in the vicinity, and in 1742 erected the first iron furnace in this part of New Jersey.

Besides the excellent magnetite ore (and some hematite) yielding 60-70% iron, Ringwood offered the other necessities for iron-making: a good water supply for operating furnaces and forges, a plentiful amount of timber for making charcoal and nearby sources of limestone for flux. By 1775 at least eight pit mines were being worked and the industry grew further until the close of the Civil War, when operations shifted westward to the Great Lakes area where ores could be mined and shipped at lower costs.

The estimated grand total yield from the entire group of mines in 1907 was 1,221,000 tons of ore. In spite of there being a great quantity of high quality ore remaining in the hills of this area, the mines gradually closed down. Before all traces of them are completely obliterated, here, alphabetically, are some brief facts about the individual mines along with their approximate locations as shown on the map:

BLUE MINES

A general term for a group of about 8 distinct mines known for the varying blue color of the ore.

BLUE MINE

The first pit was opened by Jacob N. Ryerson prior to 1835 and measured 100' by 50' deep before it closed down in 1836. A shaft was sunk into it in 1853 which reached a depth of 130' but it was abandoned permanently prior to 1873.

BLUE HOLE

This was a small pit near the Blue mine that was opened before 1840 and became more than 100' deep by 1868.

BOARD OR SCHEMERHORN MINE

It is believed to have been an early mine probably opened by Cornelius Board and contained ore which yielded excellent iron especially desired by the early ironmasters. It was "rediscovered" in 1872 and produced 11,000 tons in one year. It closed down in 1884.

BUSH MINES

These are believed to have been worked earlier but were known to have been opened in 1854. One pit was 70' wide by 100' long.

CALER MINE

A pre-Revolutionary mine believed to be the present Keeler (see Keeler mine).

CANNON MINE

This well known and important mine was worked prior to 1763, possibly by Cornelius Board as he purchased this property in March of 1740. It was a pit 25-30' deep when the ironworks came to a halt near the end of the Revolution and no ore was taken from it until Martin Ryerson acquired the property in 1807. It was worked again in 1855 and was active in the Civil War. From 1890 on, only this and the Peters mine were in use. It had a pit roughly 150' x 200' x 200' deep and 3 levels below the bottom of the pit which reached a depth of 500'. About 1914 a vertical shaft was sunk and a hoisting tower erected over it. The Cannon mine connected with the New London, Hard and Mule mines and it is said that if extended all the ore could also be taken from the Bush, St. George, Miller, Keeler, Cooper, Peters, Hope and Oak mines through the Cannon mine shaft.

COOK MINE

It was located near the Hard mine and was opened about 1867 but not commercially worked.

COOPER MINE

These pits were opened about the time of the Civil War and by 1868 the main one was 80' long by 10' wide and 30' deep. When they were closed down in 1873 the mines were between 60' and 100' deep.

GOOD HOPE MINE

This was a pre-Revolutionary mine in the Hope Mountain group. It was reopened in 1820 but abandoned again by 1840 after having been worked to a depth of 60'.

HARD MINE

This was an outcrop of ore 150' in length in the Blue group that had been worked since pre-Revolutionary days. The pit was 175' deep by 1835 and most of the ore went to the Pompton Ironworks. It was reopened in 1870 and worked about 10 more years until it attained a depth of 400'.

HENION MINE

This was a small pit in the Blue group opened before 1840, probably by the Ryersons.

HEWITT MINE

This pit was located close to the state line near the Snyder mine and may have been one of the earliest worked since it is on land purchased by the Ogdens in 1740. The mine was 20' x 60' x 25' deep and was last worked in 1880.

HICKORY MOUNTAIN MINE

This was a shallow pit prospect.

HICKORY VALLEY MINE

Another prospect that didn't become commercial.

HOPE (or WALES MOUNTAIN) MINES

These openings on Wales Mountain (which later became known as Hope Mountain because of the names of the mines) consisted of about 9 or 10 pits. Surface ore led to their discovery in July of 1767 and much of the ore went to the Long Pond Ironworks at Hewitt. In the group were the Spanish Hope, Good Hope, Oak, Old Hope and New Hope.

KEELER MINE

This and the Caler mine were probably one and the same, the latter was worked before the Revolution and the Keeler was operating before 1836. This pit was part of the Miller-town group and measured 20' x 70' x 15' deep. It was reopened about 1853 but was idle again by 1873.

LITTLE BLUE MINE

This mine was near the Blue mine and was over 100' deep by 1868.

LITTLE RED MINE

This was a small mine in the Blue group believed to have been opened about 1874 as an exploratory pit.

LONDON MINE

Probably the same as the New London mine (see New London mine).

MILLERTOWN MINES

Millertown is the old name of a settlement located about half-way between the Cannon and Peter mines now known as the "Pipeline", for the compressed air pipeline that ran between the Cannon and Peter mines. The main mines in this group were Keeler, Miller and St. George.

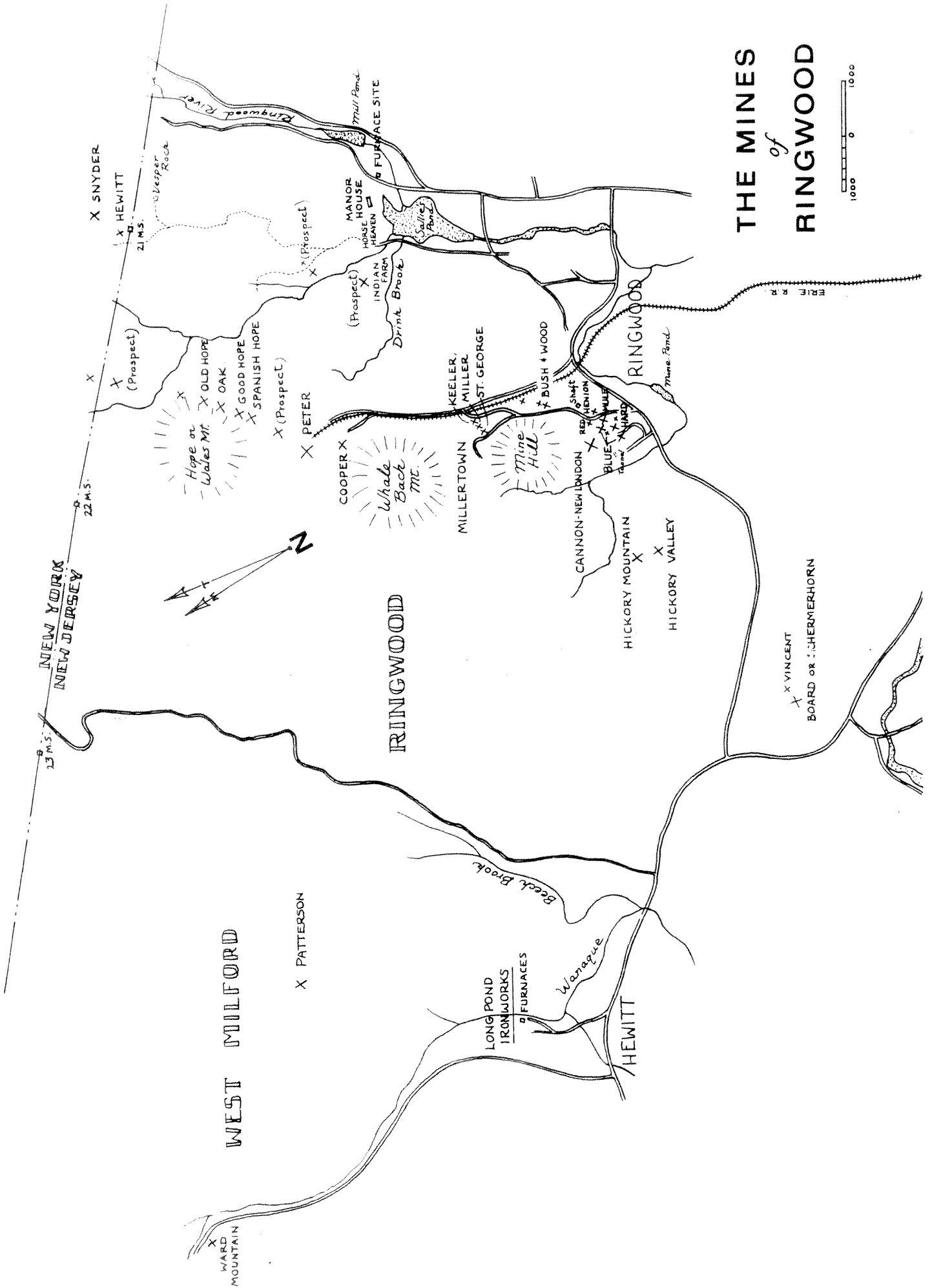
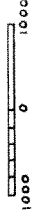
MILLER MINE

This pit was opened about 1867 and was worked to a depth of 200' before being abandoned soon after 1873.

MULE MINE

This was a pit opened before 1834 by Jacob N. Ryerson and was 300' long by 70' deep when abandoned in 1840.

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NEW CANNON MINE

This was the name given to a new opening in the Cannon mine on a new vein of ore just to the east of the old one, shortly after 1880.

NEW HOPE MINE

Part of the Hope Mountain group and probably the last of them to be opened but it too was abandoned before 1868.

NEW MILLER MINE

This was a new opening in the old Miller mine made in 1881. It was worked for 3 years to a depth of 140'.

NEW MINE

This was better known as the Wood mine (see Wood mine).

NEW LONDON MINE

Begun as a separate pit from the Cannon the ore shoots lay too closely together to continue to distinguish between the two mines. The New London was worked through the Cannon mine.

NEW PETER MINE

This was a new opening made northeast of the old Peter mine in 1883.

OAK MINE

This lay in the Hope Mountain group. It was 30' deep in 1784 and 60' deep when abandoned after 1845.

OLD HOPE MINE

Another of the Hope group - it was a pit 60' deep.

PATTERSON MINE

This mine was remote from the rest of the Ringwood group. It consisted of two shafts and several pits that were last worked in 1903.

PETER MINE

This most important mine of the Ringwood group was one of the first to be opened. The Ogdens purchased the property in April of 1740 and used the ore in the first Ringwood furnace. In 1807-8, when Ringwood began operating again after the Revolution, the pit was 150' long by 50' wide and was worked ever deeper until after 1837 when it closed down until 1880. By 1890 the shaft was 600' in length and only the Cannon and Peters mine were in use. The Peters continued on and off until June 15, 1931 when it closed, being the last of the mines in the Ramapos to be worked. During World War II it was refurbished and held in readiness in the event that the iron would be needed. When the final end came the mine has 17 levels, the lowest being 1800' below ground.

SCHERMERHORN MINE

Also known as the Board mine (see Board mine).

SNYDER MINE

Surface ore led to its discovery by the Ogdens who purchased the land on April 24, 1740. The pit was 100' long and about 25' deep in 1835. It was not worked much beyond the Civil War, but several test pits made on the southerly extension showed the ore body to be about 2500' long. A tram road ran close to it from the Peters mine.

SPANISH HOPE MINE

One of the Hope Mountain mines opened before the Revolution and closed before 1840.

ST. GEORGE MINE

This mine was located in the Millertown group. It was opened before the Civil War and closed about 1873. The pit was 35' x 60' x 75' deep.

VINCENT MINE

This pit was near the Schemerhorn mine - little else is known.

WALES MOUNTAIN MINES

The earlier name for the Hope Mountain group (see Hope mines).

WARD MOUNTAIN MINE

This was a pit near Buttermilk Falls in Hewitt that was opened and worked in 1873.

WINSLOW MINE

This was an exploratory pit opened in the Millertown area about 1874.

WOOD MINE

This pit is also known as the New mine and was opened in the winter of 1854 by the Trenton Iron Company.

Along the line of strike between the Cannon and Snyder mines, there were also ore bodies at Indian Farm, Horse Heaven and Misses Hewitt's greenhouses. For further details on the mines and iron manufacturing in the area see "Vanishing Ironworks of the Ramapos" by James M. Ransom, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J. 1966



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